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BAHNER - BOHNER FAMILY

IN

AMERICA

by J. E. Bohner





## PREFACE

The following history of the Bahner - Bohner family describes the first three generations in America. The original family included four sons and one daughter. Little information is available concerning Maria, their daughter, except that she married a Mr. Stump from Northumberland County, Pa. and then moved to Ohio.

This family had its roots chiefly in Northumberland and Dauphin counties. Today, however, it is conceivable that clan members might inhabit every state of the Union.

This booklet is the first collection of history made available for distribution. It is quite complete, due mainly to the untiring efforts of Mr. Harry P. Bahner and Mr. Ralph T. Romberger.

Corrections and additions to the material are welcomed in order that the history may be factual, accurate and useful. Send correspondence to:

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## THE BAHNER - BOHNER FAMILY

### ORIGIN OF FAMILY NAME

According to Daniel A. Bohner (1812-1904), grandson of John Nicholas Bahner, the family name originated in June of 1682. The Prince of Wiesbaden, Germany, received a summons to appear at the court of the Elector Frederick at Darmstadt. This order came at a time when plans were being finalized for the wedding of the Prince which was to take place in six days. Having finished the interview with the Sovereign, the Prince set out for the return trip without the protection of his bodyguard. He had ordered them to follow as quickly as possible.

There was a very dense and large forest area between Wiesbaden and Darmstadt, through which no regular highway existed. It was, however, crisscrossed by many paths. Hoping to save considerable time, the Prince entered one of the paths just as dusk was approaching. For hours he kept trying to find his way by taking several of the bisecting trails. Then, suddenly, he saw a glimmer of light in the distance. Urging his horse to a faster pace, he soon found himself at the door of a small hut occupied by a lone bewhiskered man who was a hunter by appearance. After explaining his predicament, the

hunter agreed to guide him to his destination. They arrived in the city only several hours before his wedding had been scheduled to begin.

What reward, if any, was bestowed upon his guide who called himself simply "Pfeltzer" (the Hunter) is not known. The Prince, however, must have kept in contact with him, because several years later he was attached to the Royal Household where he had charge of the favorite horse of the Prince.

A while later he married one of the Royal Retinue. At this time his name had been changed from "Pfeltzer" to "Bahnbrecher" which means pathfinder or pathmaker. Only one son, Johann, was mentioned. Johann had many children, but the name of only one son was remembered. At the age of thirty years, this son, Jacob, became a member of the Royal Household of the Elector Frederick and was given the name of Jacob Von Baahnerenn. Nothing is known of Jacob's wife and only two sons, John Nicholas (the American ancestor) and Henry, were mentioned.

Changing the name of Jacob by adding the title of "Von" gave him status at Court similar to that of knighthood in England. This honor was presented to him "for services rendered the State". A castle was ceded to him on the bank of the Rhine River. This castle was used

as a hunting lodge by Kaiser  
Wilhelm II of Germany as late  
as 1914.

## JOHN NICHOLAS BAHNER

John Nicholas Bahner was born in Reichenbach, Germany (about twenty-five miles from Cassel) which is located between Wiesbaden and Darmstadt. His date of birth was January 18, 1754. From infancy, John Nicholas and his brother, Henry, were raised by an uncle. Their home conditions were quite unpleasant and turbulent. As a young man, John was expelled from the house because of some minor misbehavior. He assured his uncle that he would never again enter his home.

At the age of twenty-two, John enlisted in the Hessian Army for service in the American Colonies.<sup>1</sup> In March of 1776, he embarked from Bremerhaven. After they had been at sea for about fifteen days, the commanding officer ordered John to fill the vacancy created by the death of the chief aide. They arrived at Staten Island, New York on August 15, 1776.

John belonged to a regiment of Hessian grenediers led by Colonel Rahl. He was captured near the present town of Glen Mills, near West Chester, Pa. His prison term was spent at Mount Penn, near Reading. He, along with the other prisoners, was given the choice of remaining in the Colonies. He chose to remain in America. His final discharge was given at the



Liberty Bell Hotel on the Baltimore Pike near Philadelphia. In addition to an honorable discharge, he got nearly all of his army pay from the day of enlistment in gold, plus the Elector's bonus.

Now free of all obligations, he spent several days in Philadelphia as a tourist. Then he boarded a stage coach for Lancaster. Much of his time here was spent by talking with freighters, merchants and backwoodsmen to learn about farming conditions in the interior. This information seemed to be too contradictory so he decided to look for himself. He purchased a horse, a saddle, a flintlock long rifle and enough rations for a two week stay in the woods.

It was late afternoon as he stepped from the coach that had brought him to Lancaster. Having already experienced the disgrace by which the Hessian soldier was held by the Colonials, he hesitated to seek accommodations at the public tavern. The driver of the stage directed him to the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Wagener, a German family located on the outskirts of the town. He found these folks so congenial that he remained with them during his entire stay in Lancaster.

It was about noon of the second day after his arrival in Lancaster that, while he was passing the public

tavern, the door was violently pushed open. The body of an Indian came flying through the air, landing on his back in the street near three loitering freighters. With hilarity they set upon the unfortunate redskin who would have suffered severe injury had John Nicholas not interfered. When the melee was over, one of the freighters was lying unconscious in the street. The other two, with badly mauled faces, were only too glad to quit. John assisted the injured Indian to his feet and led him to the home of the Wageners. They were very sympathetic and did all they could to make him comfortable by giving him a bed of blankets in the corner of their kitchen for the night. It was so unusual for a white family to befriend an Indian that he was profuse in his thanks. He spoke English fairly well. Before leaving the next morning, he informed John Nicholas that he was an Indian Chief whose tribe was located west of the Susquehanna River. He assured him of his undying friendship. This mutual friendship was kept alive for many years.

On his exploration trip, John travelled to Marietta, then to York where he worked for several months, and back to Lancaster by way of Harrisburg. Later he travelled through Lebanon valley which was then largely forested. There he worked on a farm near Womelsdorf for a Mr. Hibshman and met a girl who later became his wife.



Stager's  
Miss Margaret Stahr's parents occupied a farm near Fredericksburg, Pa. It was here that John and Margaret were married.

During the spring following their marriage, he set out on another search for a suitable location to settle permanently. He travelled north through Pottsville, Williamstown and Lykens. Finally John decide upon a small tract of land near Gratz.

Even though the danger of an Indian uprising along the Susquehanna had passed, the fear that the Wyoming massacre had created in the minds of many hadn't diminished. Consequently John Nicholas was not altogether satisfied with the location of his home near Gratz. It was very close to the gap in the Mahantango Mountain at Klingerstown through which Indians were accustomed to pass on their way to and from the various camps to the north and west.

A year after they began house-keeping near Gratz, they were visited by the Indian Chief whom he had rescued from the three vicious assailants at Lancaster. Every spring and fall the Chief journeyed to Lancaster for the purpose of securing supplies of tobacco and ammunition, and on this particular trip he spent the night at John's home. During their conversation John mentioned his fear of Indian molestation. The chief offered to

guide him to a certain valley where he could live in complete security.

The land John and his wife held at one time in the Mahantango Valley was probably a government grant. When he attended a sale of Public land near Klingerstown, the consideration was \$1.25 per acre. When questioned by the auctioneer as to how many acres he was buying, whether fifty or one hundred, John replied, "one thousand". This brought much laughter from the crowd. The auctioneer replied that the terms were cash and that he was in no mood for clowning. Without a word, John dismounted from his horse, opened the saddlebag and counted out \$1,250 in gold. He proved ownership of the gold by showing his army discharge papers and a statement showing the pay received as an enlistee in the Hessian army. When the crowd learned of his identity, they made many verbal insults. It was at this point that he decided to change the spelling of his name from Baahnerenn to Bahner, giving it a more English sound (so he thought).

It was in this manner that John Nicholas became a substantial landowner. However, with the passing of years, he gradually gave away parcels of land to various families and friends. He felt that all the money he received as a Hessian soldier was secured by fighting against the people with whom he wanted to live in peace and friend-

ship. Therefore he felt that in this way he was doing some good for his neighbors and friends of his adopted country. They spoke of him as "Der gude Monn" (the good man), a title which conveyed a great deal of honor among the pioneer people.

John and his wife are buried in the Stone Valley cemetery located at Dalmatia, R. D., Pennsylvania. An appropriate marker has been erected by the clan as a fitting memorial to the ancestor and his wife.

<sup>1</sup> He and his fellow Hessians were left under the impression that they were to defend the American Colonies against the incursions frequently made upon them by the Indians. After they arrived here they discovered that they were to oppose the colonies in their efforts to free themselves from British rule.

## OPPORTUNITY FOR WEALTH REFUSED

The moment John Nicholas boarded the troop ship for the Colonies he severed all ties with the fatherland. He never afterward paid it a visit. He never communicated with anyone in Germany. His voluntary separation with his native country was final and complete. John received at least two communications from Germany during his later life. The first was from his brother informing him of the death of his uncle and urging him to return and assume control of the estate. The second came several years later from the German Government informing him of the death of his brother. Since he was the only surviving relative it was imperative that he appear in person within the time specified by law and prove his right to the estate. Failing to do so would allow all of the assets to revert to the Crown. To both of these requests John Nicholas paid no attention. Because he considered himself a happy contented American citizen he desire nothing either from relatives or from the German State.

In 1898-99 a group of the Ohio branch of the Bohner clan formed an organization for the purpose of raising funds to defray the expenses of someone who would undertake a visit to the birthplace of the

ancestor and to secure such additional information as might still be available. A Mr. Meesie, an attorney, undertook the mission. After an exhaustive search, especially in the archives in the city of Bonn, he submitted the following report. At the death of his uncle a sizable fortune remained. It consisted of real estate and personal property, in addition to the Castle inherited by the family. The attorney estimated the entire fortune plus accrued interest as of 1902 to be worth in excess of \$40,000,000.

We may assume with justifiable pride that John Nicholas Bahner was possessed with an enviable character. He was endowed with a quiet, humble, self-effacing, extremely religious disposition. On the other hand, he was very strong willed. Having once determined upon a course of action which seemed to him just and morally right, his zeal in its pursuit seemed to have partaken of the spirit of the martyrs. For him, neither wealth, title, nor the plaudits of men held any attraction.



# THE DESCENDANTS OF JOHN NICHOLAS BAHNER

## GENERATION 1

### 1. Jacob Bohner

Jacob Bohner was born November 8, 1783 in Lykens Valley, Dauphin County, Pa. He died in Hebe, Northumberland County, Pa. on March 12, 1831.

He married Catherine Deibler, daughter of Mathias Deibler. She was born May 16, 1789 and died September 27, 1855. Both are buried in the Hebe Cemetery.

Jacob owned and operated three farms located about two miles west of Hebe.

#### Issue:

- i. Jacob H.; b. 8/2/1807;  
d. 4/25/1881; mar.  
Susannah Geaselman
- ii. Jonas; b. 3/24/1814;  
d. 3/2/1876; mar.  
Salome Brosius
- iii. John D.; b. 7/15/1816;  
d. 7/ /1888;  
mar. Hattie Troutman
- iv. Abraham;
- v. Daniel D.; b. / /1821;  
mar. Elizabeth Crawford
- vi. David; b. 10/ /1824;  
mar. Catherine Garman

- vii. George; b. 12/30/1826;  
d. 9/5/1882;  
mar. Sarah Bingaman
- viii. Mathias; b. 8/30/1828;  
d. 10/12/1885;  
mar. Maria Rothermel
- ix. Michael D.; b. 11/15/1833;  
d. 2/14/1913;  
mar. Catherine Rubendall
- x. Elizabeth; b.  
d.  
mar. Jacob Bower
- xi. Eva; b.  
d.  
mar. William McCoy
- xii. Polly; b. 3/ /1831  
d.  
mar. Daniel Schaffer

## GENERATION 1

### 2. Henry Bohner

Henry was born December 31, 1786 on the homestead. He died in Hebe on September 27, 1871.

The first marriage was to Mary Brosius. She was born November 17, 1790 and died June 3, 1830. His second marriage was to Anna Troutman, daughter of Heinrich Troutman. Anna was born October 16, 1807 and died March 8, 1870.

Both Henry and Anna are buried in Fairview Cemetery, Pillow, Pa. Mary is buried on a lot on the farm.

Henry farmed all of his life on his father's farm.

#### Issue:

- i. Peter; b. 10/ 1818;  
mar. Elizabeth Yearty
- ii. Jacob; b. 12/3/1815;  
d. 12/3/1896;  
mar. Salome Reitz
- iii. Henry; b. 3/28/1813;  
d. 10/23/1863;  
mar. Susanna Keefer  
mar. Esther Kramer
- iv. Nicholas; b. 11/1/1809;  
d. 11/25/1895;  
mar. Lydia Spotts
- v. Catherine; b. 2/19/1821;  
d. 5/10/1897;  
mar. Michael Spotts



- vi. Lydia; b. 9/ /1837;  
mar. Jacob Miller
- vii. Elizabeth; b.  
mar. Isaac Heim
- viii. Rebecca; b.  
mar. Michael Schaffer

### Second Marriage

- i. William; b. 3/27/1830;  
d. 3/7/1861;  
mar. Catherine Hime
- ii. Sarah; b.  
mar. Christian Gingrich

### 3. Frederick Bohner

Frederick Bohner was born June 20, 1780. He died in Hebe on December 20, 1863.

He married Eva Brosius. Eva was born on July 2, 1792 and died May 27, 1872.

Frederick settled near Uniontown (now Pillow) in Jordan Township. He owned and cultivated a large farm that was a part of the Bahner homestead. He helped to found the Evangelical Church in Uniontown.

#### Issue:

- i. Daniel: b. 5/22/1812;  
d. 3/29/1904;  
mar. Julianna Mease
- ii. Lydia; b. 7/18/1818;  
d.  
mar. John Wildermuth

- iii. Sarah; b. 7/15/1829;  
d.  
mar. John Wildermuth
- iv. Rebecca; b. 8/22/1825;  
d. 8/13/1873;  
mar. Moses Troutman
- v. Phoebe; b. 4/26/1820;  
d.  
mar. Daniel Miessee
- vi. Polly; b. 4/22/1822;  
d.  
mar. Mr. Dundore
- vii. Elizabeth; b. 8/17/1814;  
d.
- viii. Catherine; b. 7/11/1816;  
d.

#### 4. John Bahner

John Bahner was born on September 4, 1792 on the original Bahner homestead, located about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of Pillow. He died June 7, 1880.

He married Maria Delp who was born on November 5, 1789 and died December 1, 1868.

John worked for his father until of age. He then moved to a farm of 140 acres near Red Cross. This farm has been in the family name for about 125 years. In the fall of 1942, Elijah Bohner, great grandson of John, sold the farm to Mandata Poultry Company.

As a stone mason, John worked mainly in Chester,

Montgomery, Berks and Lebanon counties. Large contracts were given to him in the building of the Schuylkill Canal.

Both he and his wife were members of the Reformed Church at Red Cross.

Issue:

- i. Elizabeth; b. 2/24/1814;  
d.  
mar. Daniel Hilbish
- ii. Susanna; b.  
d.  
mar. Peter Schlegel
- iii. Peter L.; b. 10/28/1817;  
d. 4/16/1901;  
mar. Catherine Rebuck
- iv. Daniel; b. 6/19/1821;  
d. 3/15/1901;  
mar. Miss Holdeman
- v. Simon; b. 6/18/1824;  
d. 3/26/1900;  
mar. Sarah Zartman
- vi. David; b. 10/5/1824;  
d.  
mar. Catherine Garman
- vii. John; b. 3/17/1826;  
d. 4/29/1914;  
mar. Catherine Ferster
- viii. Benjamin; b. 11/21/1831;  
d. 3/21/1914;  
mar. Anna Kline
- ix. Catherine; b. 12/18/1829;  
d. 10/8/1862;  
mar. Adam Ferster
- x. Marisha; b. 9/8/1819;  
d.  
mar. Peter Thomas

xi. Dinah; b. 9/22/1833  
d. 12/26/1907  
mar. Daniel Schreffler

GENERATION NUMBER 1

CHILDREN

Stager

Margaretta (Stager)  
b. 2-26-1754 d. 8-13-1831

MOTHER

1

Jacob Bohner  
b. 11-8-1783 d. 3-12-1831

2

Henry Bohner  
b. 12-31-1786 d. 9-27-1871

3

Frederick Bohner  
b. 6-20-1780 d. 12-20-1863

4

John Bahner  
b. 9-4-1792 d. 6-7-1880

5

Maria (Stump)  
b. d.

6

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GENERATION NUMBER 0

John Nicholas Bahner  
b. 1-18-1754 d. 2-5-1824

FATHER

GENERATION NUMBER 2  
CHILDREN

MOTHER

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FATHER

GENERATION NUMBER 1

GENERATION NUMBER 3

CHILDREN

MOTHER

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12

FATHER

GENERATION NUMBER 2

GENERATION NUMBER 4

CHILDREN

MOTHER

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FATHER

GENERATION NUMBER 3



GENERATION NUMBER 5  
CHILDREN

MOTHER

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FATHER

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12

GENERATION NUMBER 4

GENERATION NUMBER 6

CHILDREN

MOTHER

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FATHER

GENERATION NUMBER 5

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GENERATION NUMEER 7

CHILDREN

MOTHER

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FATHER

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GENERATION NUMBER 6

GENERATION NUMBER 8  
CHILDREN

MOTHER

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12

GENERATION NUMBER 7

FATHER

GENERATION NUMBER 9  
CHILDREN

MOTHER

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12

FATHER

GENERATION NUMBER 8

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